

meeting the objective of facilitating veterans readjustment.

The Commission members elected Mr. Anthony Principi to serve as chairman and Mr. Kim Wincup as vice chairman. Mr. Principi is a former Deputy Secretary and Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Mr. Wincup is a former Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Acquisition) and Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Both of these commissioners also have significant experience on Capitol Hill, and are well known in military and veterans circles. The additional 10 Commission members are: Gen. James B. Davis (Ret.), Mr. Richard Johnson, Mr. Mack Fleming, Mr. Tom Harvey, Lt. Col. Renee Priore (Ret.), Brig. Gen. Robert (Steve) Stephens (Ret.), Mr. Ron Drach, Mr. Christopher Jehn, Lt. Gen. Edgar Chavarrie (Ret.), and Mr. Michael Blecker. Each of the members has responsibilities outside of the Commission, and I appreciate the job they are about to take on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address what I feel to be the most important objective for the Commission to accomplish. We have a wide variety of benefits for veterans and active duty members about to leave the service. These programs have been put in place over the years as Congress saw a need and had the resources to meet those needs.

The Commission's challenge, as I see it, is to determine whether these programs work well as a transition and readjustment package. For all that our servicemembers do in service to our country, we owe them as smooth a return to civilian life as possible, and this Commission's job is to provide us with an independent analysis on how well the package of programs and benefits are doing the job. Each Commission member has a diverse and knowledgeable background in the areas of military and veterans' affairs, and I am confident that they can meet this challenge.

#### THE COST OF LIVING ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1997

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 1997*

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue that affects millions of Americans. As you all know, the recently released Boskin Commission concluded that the Consumer Price Index [CPI] overstates the rate of inflation by 1.1 percent. In light of this finding, several changes to the way in which the CPI is calculated have been proposed. Members of Congress, the President, and other government officials have different ideas on whether the Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS] should continue to adjust the CPI when necessary or if an independent commission should make any needed changes. However, one element is lacking with these proposals: accountability.

Whether we continue to have the Bureau of Labor Statistics determine the CPI, or pass that responsibility along to an independent commission, or choose another alternative, Members of Congress have a duty to ensure that any changes to the CPI are in the best interest of our citizens. We must be held to a vote on the matter.

There are tough choices ahead in our quest to balance the budget. Federal benefits whose

COLA's are linked to the CPI include: Social Security, Federal employee and military retirement, veterans pensions, child nutrition programs, and the Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC]. In addition, income tax brackets are also determined by the CPI. A quick fix to the problem of balancing the budget could be simply to adjust the rate of inflation, which would lower payments for recipients of benefits of all of the above programs and raise taxes. But quick fixes rarely solve the problem over the long run. We should not use the CPI as a budget balancing tool.

The CPI is a cash cow that some Republicans are trying to use to achieve their budget goals. They are shopping for a commission to do the BLS's job, because they want the CPI decreased, and the BLS is not moving quickly enough for them. If the BLS was not being pressured by these Republicans and some in the Administration to recalculate this index to their specifications, this bill would not be necessary.

The Republicans want the President to change the CPI administratively. They want this to be done so that when our seniors' Social Security COLA's are reduced, they can blame it on someone else. They are hiding behind someone else's decision instead of holding themselves accountable for these extremely difficult budget decisions facing this Congress.

The BLS and its commissioner, Katharine Abraham, are moving as quickly as they can to examine if any changes should be made to the CPI. This is not an expert science, but it is the best system we have. The BLS economists are experts, and should be the ones to continue to make these important calculations.

My legislation does not offer any particular solution to fix the CPI. Instead, it simply requires that any proposed changes be approved by the Congress. During consideration of the fiscal year 1996 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, I, along with Representative BARNEY FRANK, offered an amendment which would protect Social Security COLA's, among other things, from unfair cuts by requiring Congressional approval of any changes in the formula used to calculate the CPI. My amendment was passed by the House, but later dropped in the House-Senate conference on the bill.

My amendment has now been reintroduced as a free standing measure. I hope that all of my colleagues will join me and again decide to be held accountable for any changes to the many programs that are affected by changes in the CPI.

#### INDIAN HILL PRIMARY'S INTERNATIONAL PEACE MUSEUM

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 1997*

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues a wonderful event that has taken place at a primary school I visited back home in the district I represent.

The students at Indian Hill Primary have been learning about the many opportunities available to them on the Internet. The teachers have made this new technology an integral part of their lesson plans which, as the principal said, makes their daily lessons come alive.

For example, second grade students, motivated by the example set by Dr. Martin Luther King in his battle for equality through non-violent protest, decided to share what peace means to them. With innovative leadership from teachers, facilitators, and the creativity of the students, their efforts culminated in the creation of the "International Peace Museum."

This museum web site includes the students' definitions of peace, while also displaying the second graders' illustrations. Because they invite other classes, students, leaders, and governments from around the world to contribute, the students at Indian Hill Primary have already heard from schools in Bermuda, Canada, and throughout the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Indian Hill Primary's International Peace Museum.

#### INTRODUCTION OF INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENTS

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 13, 1997*

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer legislation with the ranking minority member of the Resources Committee, Mr. GEORGE MILLER. The 104th Congress considered several legislative bills to amend the Indian Child Welfare Act [ICWA], however, none of the legislative measures were enacted into law. In May 1996, the Committee on Resources and I directed the Tanana Chiefs Conference to begin a consultation effort with the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, National Indian Child Welfare Association, and tribes to draft ICWA legislation.

Last year, tribal representatives met in Tulsa, OK, to reach a consensus to address concerns expressed with the ICWA. This legislation contains identical language which was drafted and agreed to by the Academy of Adoption Attorneys and tribal representatives in H.R. 3828. H.R. 3828 was favorably reported out of the Committee on Resources, however it was not considered by the House in the 104th Congress. This legislation addresses many of the concerns of the adoption of native children by providing notice to tribes for voluntary adoptions, terminations of parental rights, and foster care proceedings. It provides for time lines for tribal intervention in voluntary cases and provides criminal sanctions to discourage fraudulent practices in Indian adoptions. The proposal provides for open adoptions in States where State law prohibits them and clarifies tribal courts authority to declare children wards of the tribal courts. Additionally, it clarifies the limits on withdrawals of parental consent to adoptions. In addition, it states that attorneys and public and private agencies have a duty to inform Indian parents of their rights under ICWA, and provides for tribal membership certification in adoptions. These reforms resolve the ambiguities in current law which resulted in needless litigation, and have disrupted Indian adoption placements without reducing this country's commitment to protect native American families and promote the best interest of native children.

Mr. Speaker, all of the provisions contained in this bill have been tentatively embraced by the Academy of Adoption Attorneys and tribal representatives. My committee will seek additional input from the Department of Justice,